

## **The Lost Town of Handleton By Ben Martin**

### **Overview**

“The Lost Town of Handleton” is an unsettling short mystery set in the small hamlet of Handleton. The town has been enveloped in a mysterious, slowly spreading fog and everyone in town seems to have disappeared. The players will be investigating what happened and how to stop it from spreading. This is an adventure for 3rd Level Parties.

**Part 1: An Empty Manor.** The players arrive at the manor of the ruling lady that requested their assistance only to find it devoid of staff and the lord missing. However tasks are being repeatedly carried out throughout the house by some unknown force. Here the players will find partially destroyed and encoded research notes of the lord that will lead them to his laboratory in town.

**Part 2: An Empty Town.** After investigating the manor the party will head out into the fog filled streets of Handleton where they will either go to the only lit house in town or the lady’s laboratory. Either option will lead them to the ritual site in the woods.

**Part 3: A Woodland Ritual.** The players will journey to the epicenter of a ritual the lady took part in that opened up a rift to the Shadowfell, and using the notes that they found will enact another ritual to close the rift while holding back the monsters coming forth.

### **Adventure Hook**

The Lady Seraph Barrowmore has requested the aid of the party with an unspecified problem that she has, with either the promise of monetary reward or personal connection to one of the party members being the driving force or both.

## **Part 1: An Empty Manor**

This adventure begins with the party approaching the manor during sunset.

### **Location 1: The Mansion**

*Atop a hillside overlooking the Town of Handleton is Barrowmore manor, a looming and imposing building that would have no place in the modest and rustic town below. The last rays of sunshine peak around the building, casting an orange and violet glow throughout the fog covered grounds. The Lady Seraph Barrowmore has asked for your assistance in a matter most private and urgent, unfortunately you have arrived a bit later than expected. Ahead of you the manor looks bleak and lifeless, the warm glow of candlelight absent from the windows.*

The manor is occupied by several beings called **Skulks**, they are invisible creatures from the Shadowfell that mimic the lives and routines of those that they have killed in order to find meaning to their lives. If anyone of them is interrupted or prevented in doing their tasks they will fly into a rage and attack the party, however if the players cooperate with the invisible beings in each of the rooms a skulk wearing the Lady Barrowmore’s skin and clothes will be waiting by the door:

*Fair and bloody skin hangs off of an invisible figure, its mouth in a silent scream, you can see the bloody flesh on the otherside of its head through its eye holes and mouth. Different parts of skin seem to be stretched out and others seem to be hanging off of a bone on some sort of misshapen figure adorned in fine dress with long black hair matted with dried blood.*

It will give them a piece of paper with the following scrawled messily on it:

*“Bone of the Original, Flesh of the Damned, Blood of the Caster”*

If they players try to leave before completing all the tasks the skulks will attack them as they are dissatisfied with their current conditions and want to find new meaning in the party's lives. By completing the tasks in each room the party is helping them to find some semblance of meaning in serving at this abandoned house.

Throughout their time in the manor make sure to set the eerie and unsettling tone of the setting, this is an empty mansion with invisible creatures inhabiting it. Mention how the players feel they are being watched, the odd footstep down the hallway, or knocking coming from a wall. Make sure the players never get comfortable in any one room or area of the house and keep them on edge. There are also no reflective surfaces in this house, every mirror has been smashed and all cutlery is wooden.

#### **Room 1A: Main Hallway:**

*A long dark corridor stands in front of you, the only source of light is the fading daylight streaming in through the windows further down the hall, illuminating dusts particles that flit through the air. A wooden clacking can be heard on your left. Ahead of you, there is a ruined staircase.*

There is not much to do in the hallway unless the players initiate a fight with the Skulks. **The players cannot go upstairs**, if they attempt to the skulks will become enraged and attack the players. Make it impossible to do so, for example if they try to tie a rope, the wood tied to it falls down etc. When they try to go back to the set of double doors that lead outside they will see the skulk wearing the lady's skin and clothes in their way.

#### **Room 1B: Kitchen**

*The sound of wood on wood can be heard as a floating wooden knife strikes against an empty cutting board, a*

*rancid smell fills your nose as you see raw and rotting meat and vegetables being tossed into a pot over an unlit stove.*

No task to complete here, there are two skulks in this room, one at each of the counters preparing a meal. They will ignore the players trying to verbally get their attention. Any physical interference will result in angering them and the rest of the skulks.

#### **Room 1C: Side Hallway**

*Grand panes of colored and dusty glass line the wall creating a dull kaleidoscope display. A large statue of an ancient warrior faces one of these windows. The window opposite the kitchen door has its drapes drawn and closed repeatedly.*

The tasks in here is that the players must close all the other drapes in the room, when they do the skulk manning the other window will stop and let the curtains close. However interfering will cause it to become angry.

#### **Room 1D: Storeroom**

*A musty odor reaches your nose as you take note of the various rotten food items strewn across the floor. You see a rotten apple floating out of an empty barrel before going back in.*

The players must put all the fruit into the boxes, there are 10 apples, 7 oranges, and 4 pears. Each fruit must have its own container. There is also 8 potatoes, 10 carrots, 6 chickens, 5 cuts of steak, and 4 pork cutlets. If they put anything into the boxes aside from the fruit the skulk in the room will become enraged.

#### **Room 1E: Armory**

*Lining the wall are several suits of armor on display, none of them complete. A floating brush scrubs away at the chest plate of the one in the center.*

The players must make the other two suits of armor match the one in the center, which has a chest piece, legs, no right boot or arm, as well as a missing the left gauntlet. The boots of the armor are symmetrical. The right side has a chest piece, legs, no boots, and both arms and gauntlets. The left side has no arms, a chest piece, legs, and both boots. Disturbing the middle one in any way will anger the skulk.

### **Room 1F Library**

*The smell of dust and parchment fills your nose in this stuffy room, numerous torn and shredded books line the shelves. Shredded parchment lies scattered on the ground. Atop a stack of books lies a single relatively untouched piece of parchment paper.*

No tasks to complete in this room, the main objective is the piece of paper which reads: “My memory seems to be failing me as of late, objects have been moved across the house without my knowing, and I hear strange noises in the night. It is vital to remember this so I shall right in down in fear of losing my sanity, the key to my safe in my town laboratory is located under the floorboards in the entrance way. I have too many precious things in there for me to simply lose.”

### **Room 1G: Dining Hall**

*A long table stretches from one end of this ornate dining room to the other, several place settings of fine dishes and wooden cutlery line the table. At several of the place settings knives and forks stand upright and as you enter the room they start to lift into the air before banging themselves on the table.*

There are enough skulks sitting down at this table to fill every seat including the party, so 8 – # of party members. The task is to sit down and “eat dinner”. If

the players sit down read this: *As the last member of your group sits themselves down at the table, the doors to the dining room burst open as several floating dishes enter the room piled high with what appears to be food. As the plates are set down in front of your, an overbearing stench of rotting food fills the room as mounds of what can only be described as garbage festers on the plates in front of you. The floating utensils around you stop their banging and dart forward to skewer some of the rotting vegetables and meat and place it on the plate in front of them.*

If the players eat the food, have them make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or gain the poisoned condition.

### **Room 1H: Courtyard:**

*A heavy blanket of fog sits on this still courtyard. Not a single breeze rustles the branches of the nearby trees. The sound of buzzing flies reaches your ears accompanied by the smell of death, blood, and decay. You can barely make out the shape of a figure on the ground in the corner of the courtyard.*

No tasks to accomplish in this room, main object of importance is the body of Lady Seraph Barrowmore, who has been stripped of her skin leaving only a pile of meat and bone that barely resembles a human. An Investigation check of 13 or higher will reveal the signet ring of the House Barrowmore with the symbol of the head of a great hound on it underneath her left arm.

### **Leaving:**

If they try to leave without completing the tasks in the Kitchen, Side Hallway, Storeroom, Armory, and Dining Hall, the skin wearing skulk will let out a low wail that is echoed by the other skulks throughout the house which total to skin skulk + 5 + (8-# of Players) who will then mindlessly rush the players. Upon killing the skin skulk they will find the slip of paper with the ritual

ingredients on it. If they did complete the tasks then the skulk will let out a low moan and give them the slip of paper described earlier.

When the players leave they should either be heading to the laboratory due to the parchment in the library or going into town to look for clues.

## **Part 2: An Empty Town**

This should begin when they step out of the manor.

*Overlooking the twilight lit town encompassed by fog, only two building stick out to you. One whose numerous chimneys rise above the fog, and the other is the only house giving off light in the entire town.*

Now they will either go to the Burned Out Lab or the illuminated house, aka Mother's House.

### **Location 2: Burned Out Lab**

*Walking down the cold and silent road, you peer through the fog as you approach the odd building. Spires of brick that once used go up above the low fog line, out of the burned up shell that was this building. Blackened wood and ash are what remains of the building. The stone remnants of what used to be a doorway can be seen, a pristine arching monolith in this graveyard of ash. A scorched metallic box can also be seen among the wreckage.*

The key can be found in the remains of the floorboards by the doorway if the players already know its location or it can be found with a DC 15 Perception Check. The key unlocks the safe which contains notes and a map that marks a location in the nearby forest. From the notes the players can gather that Lady Barrowmore was attempting to reach out to the Feywild in order to make a contract with faeries but something went wrong and she ended up contacting its opposite, the Shadowfell, a place of death and shadows. If the rift isn't closed soon the Shadowfell's influence will continue to expand and

more monsters will pour out of it into the Material World. The map marks where the local magic converges making it ideal for rituals. In order to close the gap one must "Light the fire and make the offerings."

Among the wreckage they can also find 3 potions of healing with a perception check of 13.

### **Location 3: Mother's House**

*Amongst all the lifeless houses and building that line the streets, this is the only one to have any sign of life. It is a modest little cottage, made of wood, stone, and glass. Candlelight softly flickers in the windows before suddenly the door slams opens and a small tiefling child bursts out with wide eyes. He says in a shouted whisper "Get out of here before Mother sees you or your necks will be slit!"*

The kid's name is Copernicus Joyful, and he is very scared of the skulk that he calls "Mother". Every night he is forced to bed at a strict time by an invisible being that force feeds him rotten food every meal. Copernicus is a very bright boy and grew up surrounded by bullies picking on him for his tiefling heritage so he knows how to keep his head down. He will be hesitant to talk but will open up if the party reveals a willingness to help. Upon questioning the kid can reveal the following:

- The fog slowly came into town day by day from the woods to the North.
- The fog has been slowly growing.
- These creatures came with the fog.
- He saw the Lady Barrowmore break down sobbing in the middle of the street.
- The creatures can be seen in reflections and hate mirrors, they appear to mimic the life of those they've killed.

Quotes: "My names Copernicus, call me Cappy for short, saves time we don't have."

"These scratches are from when I made the mistake of not calling that thing Mother."

“The men would go out into the fog, and the Empty would return.”

“Misters if you can stop whatever it was that took my mamma away, I’ll tell you anything you want to know.”

Once the party finishes talking with Cappy a high pitched wail will come from the house and Cappy will remark on how “Mother” isn’t happy and will tell the party to run to the woods where it all started. He will insist that the party is outnumbered, which they are, and that the entire town is made up of those creatures. He will follow the party if prompted but will otherwise go off on his own. Make sure the party doesn’t stay to fight or they will die.

#### **Off to the woods.**

No matter where the party went make sure that they are on the way to the ritual site after they visit one of the two locations.

#### **Part 4: A Woodland Ritual**

##### **Location 4: The Ritual Site**

*The woods in front of you open up to a clearing of withered grass and trees, a thick fog clings to the ground around your ankles and a hazy distortion hangs in the air. In the center of the clearing is an ornate brazier surrounded by torches blazing a deep blue. A low wail echoes throughout the clearing as you hear the sound of rapidly approaching footsteps in front of you.*

As soon as they arrive start it off with a combat with **4 skulks**. They will relentlessly attack the closest to the rift not caring for their own personal safety.

Afterwards they will need to start the counter ritual which requires the Bone of Lady Barrowmore, the original caster, The Flesh of the Skulk, damned to an empty existence, and a vial of blood from whoever is enacting the ritual to be placed in the brazier and then the person whose blood is in the brazier is meant to light the brazier. An Arcana Check of 13 can be used to figure this out if the players don’t on their own.

If they do not have all the required ingredients, allow them to go back to the manor but it will be devoid of any skulk save for skulk corpses.

#### **The Fight**

Once the ritual is enacted they will need to last 1 minute for the ritual to finish, or 10 rounds of combat against a **Wraith, 2 specters, and 3 skulks** that arrive through the rift. The Wraith will turn any fallen Skulks that died in the past minute into specters as they are humanoids. The wraith will hang back letting the specters and skulks do most of the work but will step in with a Life Drain if the minions start to get pushed back. The wraith will also personally attack any downed players in the hopes of killing them to make them a specter.

If necessary, the ritual time can be shortened but the party is not meant to beat these enemies, just stall them long enough for the ritual to be completed at which point they will vanish and be transported back to the Shadowfell along with every other skulk in town.

#### **The End**

If the players succeed, the fog is lifted from the surrounding area and the skulk vanish. In the coming days the crown sends official investigators and several magical scholars visit the town and ritual site to examine what happened. Those who managed to flee return to collect their belongings and a small monument is built to remember the fallen. Cappy is sent to live with his Aunt, and in the end no one really settles back down in Handleton. It serves as a warning to those dabbling in the gaps between worlds to sometimes not mess with the unknown.

If the players fail, then the fog eventually spreads to two nearby towns, killing their inhabitants before commissioned adventurers come to deal with it.

## Appendix A: Monster Stat Blocks

**Skulk:** <https://www.kassoon.com/dnd/monster-stat-block/113/skulk/>

**Wraith:**  
<https://roll20.net/compendium/dnd5e/Wraith#content>

**Specter:**  
<https://roll20.net/compendium/dnd5e/Specter#content>

## Appendix B: Battle Maps

Barrowmore Manor:



Ritual Site:

